

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The previously pending claims were cancelled and replaced by previously-presented claims 33-47. By the present Amendment, previously-presented independent claims 33 and 47 are cancelled, claims 34 and 38-46 are amended and new claims 48-54 are added.

In the Office action, the Examiner rejected claims 33-47 as being anticipated by Couch (GB 2 338 772). Independent claims 33 and 47 have been cancelled rendering the rejection of these claims moot. In view of the present Amendment, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections for the remaining rejected claims and consideration of the new claims.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's time and consideration during the Interview held on February 12, 2008. As set forth in the Interview Summary prepared by the Examiner, Applicants' representative and the Examiner discussed claim 33 and proposed new claim 48. Applicants' representative notes that claim 34 was also discussed. Applicants' representative and the Examiner also discussed the Couch reference with respect to these claims. Agreement was not reached on the claims. However, as discussed below in more detail, Applicants have incorporated language suggested by the Examiner in the new claims and in amended claim 34.

New independent claim 48 is based on previously-presented claim 33 and specifies that the fastening part includes a wall having an inner surface defining a non-tapered opening through the fastening part, the wall of the fastening part being straight and extending to a free terminal end, and that the reinforcing element includes a wall having a non-tapered outer surface engaging the inner surface of the fastening part, the wall of the reinforcing element extending along the wall of the fastening part and at least to the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part. Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art of record, including Couch, does not teach or suggest at least this subject matter. Accordingly, new independent claim 48 and dependent claims 34-46 and 49-52 are allowable. In addition, the subject matter set forth in the dependent claims, such as, for example, in dependent claims 34 and 49-52, provides separate bases for allowance.

Dependent claim 34 has been amended to depend from new independent claim 48 and to specify that the reinforcing element has thereon an outwardly extending flange engaging the free terminal end of the fastening part.

New dependent claim 49 depends from claim 48 and specifies that the wall of the reinforcing element extends axially beyond the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part and radially outwardly of the inner surface of the wall of the fastening part.

New dependent claim 50 depends from claim 48 and specifies that the reinforcing element has a first portion positioned within the opening defined by the inner surface of the wall of the fastening part, the first portion having a substantially constant first diameter equal to a diameter of the opening, and a second portion positioned axially beyond the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part and having a second diameter greater than the diameter of the opening.

New dependent claim 51 depends from claim 48 and specifies that the outer surface of the wall of the reinforcing element engaging the inner surface of the wall of the fastening part is substantially straight.

New dependent claim 52 depends from claim 48 and specifies that the wall of the fastening part has an end opposite the free terminal end, and that the wall of the reinforcing member extends along the wall of the fastening part at least to the end opposite the free terminal end.

Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art of record does not teach or suggest at least the additional subject matter defined by these dependent claims.

New independent claim 53 is based on previously-presented claim 33 and specifies that the fastening part includes a wall having an inner surface defining a non-tapered opening through the fastening part, the wall of the fastening part being straight and extending to a free terminal end, and that the reinforcing element includes a wall having a non-tapered outer surface engaging the inner surface of the fastening part, the wall of the reinforcing element extending along the wall of the fastening part, an end portion of the wall of the reinforcing element extending axially beyond the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part and radially along the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part. Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art of record does not teach or suggest at least the additional subject matter, and accordingly, new independent claim 53 is allowable.

New independent claim 54 is based on previously-presented claim 47 and specifies that the fastening part includes a wall having an inner surface defining a non-tapered opening through the fastening part, the wall of the fastening part being straight and extending to a free terminal

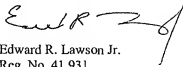
end, and that the reinforcing element includes a wall having a non-tapered outer surface engaging the inner surface of the fastening part, the wall of the reinforcing element extending along the wall of the fastening part and axially beyond the free terminal end of the wall of the fastening part, the reinforcing element having thereon an outwardly extending flange engaging the free terminal end of the fastening part. Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art of record does not teach or suggest at least this subject matter, and, accordingly, new independent claim 54 is allowable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request entry of the present Amendment and allowance of claims 34-46 and 48-54.

The undersigned is available for telephone consultation during normal business hours at the below-identified telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,



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